

[return to article](#)

## Wisconsin Film Festival: Irish movie gives fest-goers a wonderful farewell kiss

Rob Thomas

April 6, 2009

Some good things come only after you're very, very patient. And other good things get dropped in your lap at the last minute, and you don't question why.

At this year's Wisconsin Film Festival, which wrapped up on Sunday, the Irish film "Kisses" was definitely the latter example. Festival director Meg Hamel found out last week that a film she had booked to play the Orpheum Theatre on Sunday afternoon, the black comedy "Special People," would not be available after all in a 35mm print.

That left festival organizers scrambling to fill a fairly major hole in their four-day schedule. On Thursday, the first day of the festival, the festival announced that "Kisses" was going to be screened in place of "Special People."

And what a great, heart-breaking little film it was -- I described it in a tweet as "'Before Sunrise' with foulmouthed Irish kids." Lance Daly's relatively brief (72 minutes long) film follows one night in the life of Kylie and Dylan, two 13-year-old Irish kids living in a bleak housing community on the outskirts of Dublin. Stuck with disinterested, sometimes abusive parents and little economic prospects, Kylie and Dylan seem destined to live and die in the same few square blocks.

But together, on a whim, they decide to hop on a garbage scow trawling the nearby canal and motor into downtown Dublin, where Dylan thinks his runaway older brother is living. What follows is a series of rough-and-tumble adventures in the inner city, some gritty (a harrowing run-in with a child molester) and some witty (a chance meeting with Bob Dylan -- maybe -- played well by an uncredited Stephen Rea).

Dylan is tough but rather guileless, Kylie is street smart but with a romantic streak, and as the night draws them closer together, Daly's camera lingers beautifully on their adolescent faces, hope and suspicion intermingling on their faces. You can see the carefree kids they were and the hardened adults they'll one day be.

The soundtrack features several Dylan songs, and Daly employs a really interesting visual gimmick: In the opening scenes, when the kids are in their dead-end homes, the film is in a stark black-and-white. But as they move farther from home, color starts to seep in, until they reach a vibrant Technicolor Dublin. This technique sets up a beautiful little moment at the end of the film, when the pair are dragged back to their homes. The movie goes back to black-and-white, except for one brief, glorious burst of color that suggests that the story of Dylan and Kylie is just getting started.